Introduction of cleaner fuel and improvement in engine technology as per the Road Map provided in the auto fuel policy apart from strengthening the public transport system including Metro Rail network will help in abatement and control of finer dust particles in ambient air in Delhi.

Forest cover

1118. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that forest cover is decreasing day by day;

(b) if so, the details of the forest cover as compared to five years back; and

(c) the steps Government is taking to maintain the forest cover?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The Forest Survey of India carries out forest cover assessment of the country using remote sensing technology once every two years and publishes the findings in "State of Forest Report'. The forest cover of the country as per 2001, 2003 and 2005 assessments is given below:

Assessment Year	2001	2003	2005
Forest cover (in km^2)	653,898	677,816	677,088

It can be seen that the forest cover of the country has increased by 23,918 km^2 between 2001 and 2003 assessments, and decreased marginally by 728 km^2 between 2003 and 2005 assessments. The main reasons for this marginal decrease of 728 km^2 were the Tsunami and submergence of forest area due to construction of dams.

(c) The government of India has taken following steps to maintain and increase the forest cover:-

(i) Allocation of the flagship "National Afforestation Plan" (NAP) scheme during the 11th Plan has been raised to Rs. 2000 crore. Till 31.03.2008, 782 Forest development agency projects for treatment of total project area of 1.41 million hectares have been approved by the Ministry, under this scheme.

(ii) In addition to the programmes of Ministry of Environment and Forests, tree planting is being encouraged in the schemes/programmes of other Ministries, for example:

- National Bamboo Mission (Ministry of Agriculture).
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (Ministry of Rural Development).
- Integrated Water-shed Management Programme.

The MoEF has also requested other Ministries, such as Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Department of AYUSH, etc to provide support of JFMCs for value addition and marketing of forest products.

(iii) As a follow-up of the mid-term appraisal of Tenth Five Year Plan, a new scheme for afforestation involving Panchayati Raj Institutions for tree planning on non-forest lands is mooted.

(iv) Establishment to two new Eco-Task Force (ETF) battalions for eco-restoration of degraded areas was mooted by the Ministry, in addition to supporting the existing four ETF battalions.

(v) States have been advised to constitute State-level coordination committee under chairmanship of Chief Secretaries for eliciting cooperation of all land-owning Departments for contributing towards increase in forest and tree cover.

(vi) Guidelines have been issued by Government of India on 15-12-2004 to the States for rationalization of regulatory provision about felling and transport of trees grown on private lands, so as to promote tree planting by the masses.

(vii) State Government and Union Territory Administrations have been requested to formulate and implement a comprehensive media plan to create awareness about tree planting.

Forest cover area

†1119. SHRI ISHWAR SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the total area covered under forests in India and whether Government intends to allot land which is barren to the landless?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): The recorded forest area in the country is 769,626 km^2 which is 23.41% of the geographic area of the country. At the same time the total forest and tree cover of the country has been estimated as 768,751 km^2 constituting 23.40% of the geographic area. Of this forest cover is 677,088 km^2 (20.60%) and Tree Cover is 91,663 km^2 (2.79%). These figures are as per State of Forest Report (SFR), 2005. The restriction on the dereservation of forests or use of forest land for non-forest purpose is guided by forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and rules thereunder.

Elephant menace

†1120. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether elephant menace has increased in the country, recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.